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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 /052 W
---------- 107650
P 050843Z NOV 76
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2330
INFO USIA WASHDC PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 17188

E. O. 11652: GDS 12/31/82
TAGS: PINS, RP, US
SUBJECT:EXPULSION OF AP BUREAU CHIEF

REF: MANILA 16971-C

SUMMARY: IN SURPRISE MOVE ON ARNOLD ZEITLIN CASE,
LETTER SIGNED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS WAS RELEASED LATE
NOVEMBER 4 AND APPEARED IN MOST MANILA DAILIES
NOVEMBER 5. LETTER, ADDRESSED TO IMMIGRATION COM-
MISSIONER, REFERRED TO EXPULSION AS "STARTLING NEWS"
AND REQUESTED WRITTEN EXPLANATION FOR ACTION.
IN RELATED DEVELOPMENT, THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS
ASSOCIATION CALLED A MEETING THE MORNING OF NOV. 5
AND AGREED TO SEND A LETTER TO PRESIDENT MARCOS
EXPRESSING "VERY GRAVE CONCERN" OVER ZEITLIN'S OUSTER.
END SUMMARY.

1. ON MORNING NOVEMBER 5 MOST MANILA DAILIES FRONTPAGED
STROY FEATURING HANDWRITTEN LETTER DATED NOVEMBER 3 SIGNED
BY PRESIDENT MARCOS DIRECTING IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONER
EDMUNDO REYES TO PROVIDE HIM A WRITTEN EXPLANATION OF HIS
ACTION IN DENYING ENTRY TO AP BUREAU CHIEF ARNOLD ZEITLIN,
WHO DEPARTED FOR HONG KONG AFTERNOON OF NOV 3.

TEXT OF LETTER FOLLOWS:
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"COM. EDMUNDO REYES

"COMMISSION ON IMMIGRATION

"I HAVE JUST BEEN TOLD THE STARTLING NEWS THAT YOU DENIED REENTRY TO THE PHILIPPINES TO ARNOLD ZEITLIN OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS.

"IF SO, EXPLAIN IN WRITING WHY YOU DID SO.

"AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH YOU ACTED.

"CALL ME UP BY TELEPHONE AS SOON AS YOU CAN.

F.E. MARCOS"

2. LETTER WAS RELEASED BY DPI SECRETARY FRANCISCO "KIT" TATAD LATE NOVEMBER 4. TATAD ADDED IN SEPARATE STATEMENT THAT THE IMMIGRATION COMMISSION'S ACTION IS NOW "THE SUBJECT OF PRESIDENTIAL INQUIRY." FINAL PARAGRAPH OF LETTER ASKING REYES TO CALL PRESIDENT ON TELEPHONE WAS NOTED BY TATAD AS CONVEYING THE PRESIDENT'S "SENSE OF URGENCY."

3. FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION OF PHILIPPINES (FCAP) CALLED SPECIAL MEETING NOVEMBER 5 TO DETERMINE POSITION ON ZEITLIN OUSTER. APPROXIMATELY 20 CORRESPONDENTS, MANY OF WHOM ARE FILIPINO NATIONALS, ATTENDED--A CLEAR QUORUM--AND DEBATED MERITS OF SENDING PETITION OR LETTER, PROTEST OR EXPRESSION CONCERN. SESSION CLEARLY REFLECTED MORE ANXIETY OVER POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR THEMSELVES THAN OVER RESOLUTION OF ZEITLIN AFFAIR. DECISION WAS TO SEND LETTER SIGNED BY GABY TABUNAR (CBS), FCAP PRESIDENT, EXPRESSING ASSOCIATION'S "VERY GRAVE CONCERN" OVER ZEITLIN CASE. LETTER WAS NOT TO REQUEST REMEDIAL ACTION OR CLARIFICATION, FOR FEAR THESE OPENINGS WOULD PROVIDE OCCASION FOR GOVERNMENT TO ISSUE NEW, MORE STRINGENT GROUND RULES FOR REPORTAGE AND/OR CONDITIONS OF WORK AND TRAVEL.

4. MOTIVE(S) FOR PRESIDENT'S ACTION NOT YET CLEAR, BUT COULD BE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:
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A) BY DISPLAYING CONCERN FOR FREEDOM OF PRESS IN THIS CASE MARCOS MAY SEEK BUILD UP IMAGE AS BENEVOLENT AND LIBERAL LEADER TRYING TO REMOVE MARTIAL LAW CURBS ON FREEDOM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THIS THEORY ENHANCED BY MARCOS' OBVIOUS DESIRE TO GET OFF ON RIGHT FOOT WITH NEW U.S. LEADERSHIP.

B) SOME POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT MARCOS MAY GENUINELY

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HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY OUSTER AND BE TRYING TO
RECOUP PR LOSSES AFTER FACT. THIS THESIS SUPPORTED BY
PRESIDENT'S HEADING OFF PRIMITIVO MIJARES OUSTER HEARINGS
AGAINST ZEITLIN BEFORE NOW-DEFUNCT MEDIA ADVISORY COUNCIL
(MAC) IN 1974. LATTER ACTION WAS RECOMMENDED BY DPI
SECRETARY TATAD, WHO SINCE HAS BEEN BOASTING TO NEWSMEN
THAT THE PHILIPPINES IS AN OPEN COUNTRY FOR FOREIGN REPORTERS.
TATAD APPEAL TO BETTER JUDGMENT WON OUT AGAINST MILITARY, AS
WELL AS MAC, OPPOSITION AT THAT TIME, BUT LATELY PRESSURES
AGAINST ZEITLIN AND OTHER HAVE BEEN REGAINING MOMENTUM,
FUELED BY GENERAL FABIAN VER, SECURITY/INTELLIGENCE COMMANDER,
AND MILITANT ULTRA-NATIONALIST, ANTI-U.S. COMMENTATORS SUCH AS
TEODORO "DOROY" VALENCIA (EXPRESS PAPERS), ERNESTO GRANADA
AND JOSE GUEVARA (TIMES JOURNAL), AND PUBLISHER KERIMA
POLOTAN TUVERA (ORIENT NEWS, EVENING NEWS, FOCUS).

C) THE CONTINUOUS FEUDING BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT'S
AND FIRST LADY'S CAMPS, WITH DPI SECRETARY TATAD AMONG THE
FORMER AND AMBASSADOR J.V. CRUZ (FORMER MALACANANG PRESS
SPOKESMAN) IN THE LATTER, LED TO RECENT SPECULATION THAT TATAD
HAD LOST FAVOR AND CRUZ WOULD REPLACE HIM. TATAD, WHO TOLD
FRIENDS HE WAS UNAWARE OF ZEITLIN'S OUSTER AND SUSPECTED
PRESIDENT WAS ALSO NOT INFORMED, COULD HAVE LOST
FACE TO THE POINT OF RESIGNATION HAD THE PRESIDENT KEPT SILENT.
THUS THERE IS SOME FEELING THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS SALVAGING
HIS PRESS SECRETARY FROM OFFICIAL OBLIVION. IF SO, THE PRESIDENT'S
ACTION AT THE SAME TIME HAD THE EFFECT OF PUBLICLY RAPPING KNUCKLES
OF IMMIGRATION CHIEF REYES, WHO ALSO DRAWS SUPPORT FROM
MRS. MARCOS (ALTHOUGH OCCASIONALLY AT ODDS WITH BOTH CAMPS).

5. MARCOS' MOVE REDOUNDS TO HIS OWN ADVANTAGE,
WHATEVER THE RATIONALE. WHAT IS YET UNCLEAR IS WHETHER HE
INTENDS GO FURTHER BEYOND TOKEN GESTURE AND TAKE REMEDIAL
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ACTION TO APOLOGIZE TO OR READMIT ZEITLIN OR TO DISCIPLINE
OFFENDING OFFICIALS. THE MISSION, AS WELL AS MANILA-BASED
FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS, WILL BE OBSERVING NEW DEVELOPMENTS
WITH INTEREST.
SULLIVAN

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